

Teaching Online at UD

Introducing the Tools Available in Isidore

Version 1.0 – April 14, 2009, updated January 26, 2015

Ryan C. Harris Learning Teaching Center Udit – Curriculum Innovation and E-Learning

Are you new to the Isidore Learning Management System, teaching online, or both? This document serves as a quick start guide to utilizing the tools available in Isidore in an online environment. Each item listed below represents a tool found in every Isidore site along with a few ideas and suggestions.

1. Home Page

- 🕒 **Be Clear** - The Home Page of the course should clearly convey the context and general expectations of the course as well as direct students to the important items of the site.
- 🕒 **Use Creativity** - Instructors are encouraged to use the HTML editor found in the Site Information Display area to create a visually appealing layout. Simple things like adding an image, changing text size, and adding color are great ways to draw attention to important items and spruce up your site.
- 🕒 **Stay Current** – The Home Page of the site is the first thing students see when they log in so instructors shouldn't be afraid to change the content throughout the semester to match pertinent content areas.

2. Syllabus

- 🕒 **Be Detailed** - The syllabus should contain all of the pertinent class information and it should be available at all times. It should clearly state class expectations as well as the timeline for the class.
 - ③ An online syllabus should be more detailed than a syllabus an instructor provides to students in a face-to-face class.
- 🕒 **Keep it Simple** – Instructors should make their syllabus easy to access and read. It should be displayed directly on the site, not through a Word document. It's very simple to copy and paste text from a MS Word document directly into the Isidore HTML editor when creating a syllabus.
 - ③ It's much simpler for instructors to make changes to their Syllabus once it's been posted as HTML in the site.

3. Announcements

- 🕒 **Stay in Contact** -The Announcements tool should be used frequently to alert the class of important information, instructions, and due dates occurring within the class site.
 - ③ Instructors should send out announcements to the class when multiple students notice a problem in the site letting everyone know that they're aware of it.

- ⌚ Two Places are Better than One - Utilize the ‘Yes – Send an email’ setting when composing a new Announcement. This feature sends a copy of the announcement to every student’s Gmail account ensuring that they see the information even if they haven’t logged into the site.

4. Schedule

- ⌚ Be Thorough - All assignment and quiz due dates should be added to the Schedule tool at the beginning of the semester.
- ⌚ Provide Check Points - Course work ‘check points’ should also be added to the Schedule to help keep students on track.
 - ③ It’s helpful for students know where they *should* be in regards to completing course work so that they can compare it to where they are.

5. Chat Room

- ⌚ Go Live - Hold a live ‘Chat’ session once a week (Monday-Thursday) in the evening where students can log in to ask questions or discuss class work.
 - ③ The chat sessions are automatically saved in the tool so students can review the discussion at a later date if they are unable to attend the live session.

6. Forums

- ⌚ Get Students Talking - Design a series of discussion-based questions for students to respond to on a weekly basis.
 - ③ Instructors should require students to respond to each other as well as to the instructor to increase the quality of discussion.
- ⌚ Set Expectations - If the instructor is using the Forums tool for a grade the course syllabus should clearly state participation expectations. Frequently instructors will grade student posts based on quality (depth of reflection, use of terms), grammar, and the number of unique posts each week.

7. Messages

- ⌚ Introduce Yourself - Instructors should send their students a mail message one week before the class begins to introduce themselves and let them know when they will be able to begin accessing course material.
 - ③ This approach helps calm any anxieties students may have about taking a class online, explaining how it will work and when it will officially begin.
- ⌚ Send a Welcome Message - Instructors should also send students a second mail message on the day a course begins letting them know how they can access the site. The message should also inform students to read the course syllabus when they first enter the site.
 - ③ This is a good time to set class standards and draw attention to key dates during the first few weeks of the semester to help get students off on the right foot.

- 🕒 Be Available - The Messages tool allows instructors to provide prompt and private feedback to student questions.
 - ③ Instructors should check their course mailbox at least once a day during the week.
- 🕒 Nip Problems in the Bud - Timely information is important. Contact students that are falling behind or not turning their work to help get them back on track.

8. Lessons (Modules)

- 🕒 Use Chunks - Clearly lay out important class files in a module/week/chapter format so students can always find the files they need.
 - ③ Module files can include: PPT, DOCs, XLS, PDF, videos, and URLs.
- 🕒 Provide Directions - Instructors should compose a set of expectations for each 'module' so that students know how to proceed.

9. Assignments

- 🕒 Set It Up - All assignments should be created with release/due dates set inside the course before the semester begins.
 - ③ Students won't see assignments listed that haven't opened yet.
- 🕒 Provide a Timeline - The Syllabus and Schedule tools should clearly inform students when assignments open and are due.
- 🕒 Details, Details, Details - Assignment directions should be very detailed and clear to ensure that students understand.

10. Gradebook

- 🕒 Organize - The gradebook should be clearly organized so that students can always view their progress in the course.
 - ③ Sort the gradebook to ensure that all items are listed in the order that they are due.
 - ③ Use categories and weighting to help compute an accurate overall grade
- 🕒 It's Not Just About the Points - Use text 'Comments' in addition to points when appropriate to let students know why they received specific grades.

11. Tests & Quizzes

- 🕒 Don't be Afraid to Test - Instructors should create and conduct Quizzes/Exams online when appropriate.
 - ③ One of the greatest elements of the Tests & Quizzes tool is that it can grade questions automatically.
- 🕒 Ask Good Questions - Do your best to make the questions complex so that a student can't simply open their text book and find the answer.

- ③ The Tests and Quizzes tool allows instructors to build and release quizzes/exams in a variety of ways including specific open and close dates and a limited amount of time once the assessment is started.

12. Wiki

- 🕒 Encourage Collaboration - Create an online 'living' document that everyone in the class can contribute to without having to download or upload attachments.
- 🕒 Monitor - The 'History' feature built into the tool allows instructors to see who's contributing and ensure that no one's work is being deleted.